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Esser, Frank

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Metacoverage of Mediated Wars

How the Press Framed the Role of the News Media and of Military News Management in the Iraq Wars of 1991 and 2003

Frank Esser
University of Zurich

Metacoverage is understood as a discursive outcome of structural mediatization processes in modern media wars. It is defined as news stories that report on war topics in their connection to the role of news journalism or political public relations. A content analysis of press coverage on the last two Gulf Wars shows that journalists used four frames to describe the role of the news media and of military news management; these frames are called conduit, strategy, personalization, and accountability. Five leading newspapers from Germany, chosen for their detached stance in both international conflicts, displayed a marked increase in metacoverage from the first Iraq war, in 1991, compared with the second, in 2003. Journalists tended to write themselves into the story more often and portrayed the news media involvement in increasingly more active terms. Although the news media were presented as a consequential protagonist (strategy frame), their coverage also endeavored to assist citizens to reach an educated judgment on the relationship of war and media (accountability frame). Consequences for political communication and public diplomacy are discussed.

Keywords: *metacoverage; media criticism; self-coverage; news management; mediated wars; war coverage*

The information revolution of the 20th century fundamentally affected how nations resolve conflicts. Diplomatic craft requires effective use of communication to persuade public opinion around the world to support one's causes. Also, the use of propaganda or international public relations is sometimes euphemistically called *public diplomacy*. According to Gilboa (2000), public diplomacy entails one-sided communication and is used mostly in international confrontations where governments seek to create favorable images of their nations. During the cold war, for

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example, the main weapons of public diplomacy were international broadcasting such as the Voice of America (VOA), Radio Liberty, and Radio Free Europe on the American side and Radio Moscow on the Soviet side. The role of news journalism and news management has grown considerably in recent military conflicts. In particular, the U.S.-led wars against Iraq in 1991 and 2003 were highly media-centered.

Mediated Wars

We speak of mediated wars (a) when they are perceived by the audience almost entirely through channels of mass communication; (b) when their coverage follows news-value–driven selection criteria, presentational styles, and media frames that are determined by a distinctive media logic; (c) when political and military protagonists increasingly adapt their behavior to the routines and requirements of the news media or try to exploit news journalists for their own ends; and (d) when the boundaries between mediated and nonmediated aspects of reality dissolve because the media have become so deeply integrated in the sequence and interpretation of events (Altheide, 2004; Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999; Meyer, 2002; Schulz, 2004). News coverage and media use during the 1991 and 2003 Iraq wars indeed spiked, and tensions between journalistic autonomy and strategic public communication arose (Carruthers, 2000; Tumber & Palmer, 2004). The first Iraq war lasted for 43 days from the first air raid on Baghdad on January 17 until the end of the ground invasion on February 28, 1991. The news management operation of the American leadership was based on four pillars. First, the political top management developed a war legitimization strategy around the concept of "liberty" to justify the invasion to the public (Kellner, 1992). Second, the advertising agency Hill & Knowlton helped launch a media campaign designed to provide the American public with an image of Kuwait as a democratic state and also designed to demonize Iraq as a rogue state (MacArthur, 2004). Third, to convince the media as well as the public, the Pentagon employed a public relations team under the management of Pete Williams that met with journalists in background talks, striving to minimize critical press commentaries (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1992; MacArthur, 2004). All three steps were an exercise in strategic public diplomacy (Manheim, 1994). The fourth element of the media strategy was the organization and control of the journalists at the front. The Pentagon chose a compromise between free access to information and censorship by establishing the so-called pool system, which allowed the armed forces to keep control over the accreditation of press members and the reporting sites as well as the flow of information. Pools were groups of selected journalists, escorted by military personnel to precise locations, whose reports would have to pass censorship before they could be sent back to news bureaus in Dahrain, from where they would be distributed worldwide (Carruthers, 2000; Jowett & O'Donnell, 1992; Kellner, 1992; MacArthur, 2004).

The second Iraq war started on the night of March 20, 2003, with the bombing of Baghdad, despite an absent second U.N. resolution. The war lasted for 42 days until May 1, when U.S. President George W. Bush announced the end of "major combat operations" from the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln. Military news management clearly evidenced a further development that was built more strongly than in 1991 on cooperation with the media. The Pentagon publicity campaign was based on four pillars again. First, the concept of freedom was once again promoted to legitimize the war. After the operation in Afghanistan was called "Enduring Freedom," the motto chosen for the Iraq invasion was "Operation Iraqi Freedom" (Katovsky & Carlson, 2003). Second, the press briefings in the headquarters and media centers in Washington and Qatar served to influence the media and general public. The media strategy was aimed at making the military appear as a trustworthy source in order to influence the perception of events and steer the public debate (Tumber & Palmer, 2004). In this way, in line with the premises of international public relations, the information policy of the United States fulfilled many criteria of strategic public diplomacy. The third pillar consisted of the further development of the pool system into the system of the embedded journalist. Reporters were stationed directly with the troops this time. Through this new proximity, the Pentagon wanted the world media "to record heroic exploits, enemy dastardliness and hoped-for discoveries of weapons of mass destruction" (Poniewozik, 2003, p. 62). Above all, the Pentagon hoped for a sense of solidarity and camaraderie of journalists with U.S. troops. Many of the embedded correspondents made friends with the soldiers, identified with their mission, and produced more favorable reports than nonembedded reporters (Pfau et al., 2004). As in the Iraq war of 1991, there were detailed instructions, "Principles for News Media Coverage of DOD Operations," that regulated which aspects of the warfare the journalists were allowed to report and which they were not. The fourth pillar was strategic framing in the way the military campaign was sold to the public by high-ranking government officials. Examples of such information management included the much-advertised weapons of mass destruction, the alleged Iraq–Al Quaida connection, the shock-and-awe billing of the war's first phase, and the Jessica Lynch rescue. The picture-driven and largely successful U.S. information policy was countered by aggressive but largely ineffective propaganda of Saddam Hussein's totalitarian regime (Artz & Kamalipour, 2004; Katovsky & Carlson, 2003; Tumber & Palmer, 2004).

In terms of journalistic coverage, both Iraq conflicts were regarded as true media wars, the second more so than the first. This was shown by the record number of reporters. During the second invasion, more than 100 journalists reported from the famous Palestine hotel in the center of Baghdad (in contrast to a solitary Peter Arnett, who reported from the same spot in 1991). Furthermore, 600 correspondents—many from non-U.S. countries—were embedded with coalition troops; another 900 correspondents were stationed in the Kurd-controlled areas of Northern Iraq; and several thousand colleagues were based in Kuwait, Qatar, and Jordan (Tumber & Palmer,

2004). New information technology like videophones, satellite uplinks, night-vision cameras, digital 3-D animations, and high-end dispatches helped these correspondents fill a new generation of 24-hr news channels around the world (Poniewozik, 2003). In addition, Al-Jazeera, Al-Arabia, and Abu Dhabi TV entered the scene and provided alternative pictures to the leading Western news network, CNN. A greater variety of information and perspectives were available as a result.

As a consequence of the growing mediatization, the media increasingly observed their own involvement in the war. Many journalists wrote diary-like stories about themselves, their professional experiences, and their personal impressions. "The level of self-reflexivity on the part of media practitioners was unprecedented," state Tumber and Palmer (2004, p. 7); journalists "constantly examined their own and other journalists' efforts, and commented on the communication strategies of other actors." It was not uncommon for news outlets to run 50 stories on the media's role in the first 4 weeks of the Gulf War II.[1] There was also a recognizable endeavor among journalists to learn a lesson from the naivety and reporting deficiencies during the first Gulf War that resulted from the Pentagon public relations machinery imposing its views on the media.

The increased self-awareness was true for European media, too. In Germany, for example, several newspapers printed a note each day for their readers to inform them about the specific problems and limits of war coverage when the military controls the news; some papers even engaged in lengthy dissections of the American press, often voicing bewilderment at its "unquestioning" stance (Gehlen, 2003). Speaking in general, Loeffelholz (2003) considered the wave of media-on-media reports a truly new element of the media's treatment of the second Iraq war:

> Unlike any conflict before, the media self-referentially made themselves a topic of their coverage. The information policy of the armed forces, the working conditions of the correspondents, the opportunities and risks of the embedded journalism, the economic competition between TV stations, the consequences of picture dramaturgy—these and many other stories about the media and their (missing) reporting possibilities found their way to the audience. (p. 13)

Media Criticism and Metacoverage

This study examines the relationship between mediatization, a structural feature of modern wars, and metacoverage, a discursive outcome of mediatization. Broadly speaking, *metacommunication* is communication about communication; it is reflexive in the sense that it emphasizes the communicative character of mediated events rather than conveying their manifest meaning only (Simons, 1994). *Metacoverage*, more specifically, refers to a trend by journalists to make the news media, and communication-related publicity efforts aimed at them, important aspects of their

stories (Esser & D'Angelo, 2003; Gitlin, 1991; Kerbel, 1999, chap. 3). Research on metacoverage has so far been done mainly on election campaigns, and this study aims at transferring the concept to another type of mediated events—wars. Elections campaigns and wars have important characteristics in common: They are both mediated events and rely on media and public relations (PR)/publicity channels to mobilize support, generate interest, convey information, legitimize action, and communicate with the public. In similar ways, the communicative outcome of political and military campaigns depends on how media actors and PR/publicity actors fulfill their functions and arrange their interplay. Drawing on the conceptualization by Esser and D'Angelo (2003; D'Angelo & Esser, 2003), this study defines metacoverage as news stories that report on war topics in their connection to the role of the news media (i.e., media actors, media practices, media standards, media products, or media organizations) or political PR/publicity (i.e., protagonists and practices of military news management or communication-based strategic public diplomacy).

Research on metacoverage has developed out of a growing interest in press criticism and media reporting. Over the past 20 years, newspapers in the United States and Europe have committed greater resources to the media beat and expanded their media reporting (Bertrand, 2003; Fengler, 2003; Lumsden, 2002). Following earlier examples of the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*, leading German papers such as the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* or *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* set up discrete media sections in the mid-1990s. The increase in coverage of the media by the media has been explained by a growing need of knowledge about conditions of today's information society, "where the proliferation of information has forced nearly everyone to become a very self-conscious media consumer" (Colford, 1998, p. 40). But research in the United States and Europe has also unanimously shown that media organizations do not usually criticize each other—unless they are motivated by ideological animosity or business rivalry. This last aspect explains why print media often emphasize the problems of broadcast media (Robinson, 1983). Out of economic rivalry and professional envy, press critics tend to focus on television because they envy television's greater impact despite its lack of depth. If a media organization becomes involved in the news itself, however, its journalists usually draw away from the story (Turow, 1994). Referring to the blind spots in media reporting, Bertrand's (2000) cross-national study concludes that "self-criticism is almost unknown" (p. 116). These international findings apply to Germany as well: True self-criticism is very rare; writing about others is preferred to turning the spotlight on oneself (Weiss, 2005, chap. 9).

Wars usually lead to an increase in metacoverage. An example is provided by Cleve, Bertram, Karaoglu, and Yilmaz (2002), who studied how the German press covered the role of the media in the 1999 Kosovo conflict. Their results indicated that media-on-media stories focused primarily on hindrance to and prevention of reporting; on emotional reactions of readers to war reports and pictures; on the media being used by war politicians; on ethical problems faced by journalists; and

on manipulation and news management by the various war parties. In a study on the 1991 Gulf conflict, Zelizer (1992) demonstrated how U.S. journalists turned stories about the war into a forum for discussing the process of reporting itself, including references to the latest news-gathering technologies, real-time reporting, government censorship, the performance of other news media, and the repercussions of the war on journalistic practices. In examining the 2003 Gulf conflict, the academic Web journal *Transnational Broadcasting Studies* focused its entire summer 2003 issue on "Media on Media" and "Covering the Coverage," stating in its introductory essay that "in no previous war has the media been so much a part of the story" (TBS Editors, 2003). It has to be pointed out, however, that none of these analyses offers a comprehensive theoretical framework or a systematic content analysis approach.

One way of achieving this has been proposed by Esser and D'Angelo (2003; D'Angelo & Esser 2003), whose concept of metacoverage will serve—with several modifications—as the theoretical and methodological base of this study. They characterized metacoverage by three features: First, it distinguishes two dimensions, or topics, of metacoverage: reporting on the role of the news media ("press") and on the role of political PR and military news management ("publicity"). Second, press and publicity topics are accompanied by specific *frames*; the nature of these press and publicity frames is the essence of the metacoverage concept. Third, press and publicity frames never occur in isolation but always in conjunction with other topics—thereby presenting campaign topics or war topics as "mediated."

With regard to the first characteristic, a war story must contain enough direct references to the news media (e.g., terms like *journalists*, *news media*, *coverage*, *bias*, *objectivity*, *embedded reporters*) or publicity (e.g., *Pentagon spokesperson*, *orchestrated message*, *briefing*, *propaganda*, *control of information*, *military restrictions on reporting*) in its textual or visual content to warrant the claim that the story is "about" the news media or the publicity process. With regard to the second characteristic, any talk about the news media or the publicity process in political or military campaign battles is shaped by specific motives and interests. When journalists report on the news media or report on the oppositional publicity side, they are led by professional norms, professional ideologies, self-perceptions, and perceptions of military news management. When, on the other hand, government officials and military spokespeople discuss their relationship with the press or explain their own communicative goals at a press conference, they also have an interest in spinning the story a certain way. "In such a contest, participants maneuver strategically to achieve their political and communicative objectives"—a process that is studied best from a framing perspective (Pan & Kosicki, 2001, p. 40). In metacoverage of U.S., British, and German election campaigns, Esser and D'Angelo (2003, 2006) found three different frames—explained in the next section—that reporters use to discuss the role of the news media and the publicity process in their campaign accounts.

With reference to the third feature, metacoverage in election news was found to appear in specific topical contexts only. It occurred preferably in those stories that

dealt with topics like campaigning and mobilization, gaffes and nonissues, character and appearance, or polls and public opinion. By contrast, press and publicity frames almost never occurred in the thematic context of stories that dealt with substantial policy issues, political programs, or value discussions. Topic/frame connections yield important information about what aspects of modern wars are most deeply enmeshed with the news media or PR/publicity efforts. The present study examines the following topics, among others, in their relation to frames: military action, public diplomacy, pre-invasion preparations, discussion of Germany's participation, antiwar demonstrations and protests, background of and reasons for crisis, violence and casualties, political strategy, military strategy, official statements and briefings, postinvasion consequences, and others.

Frames

Esser and D'Angelo (2003, 2006) studied sentence-level propositions by journalists and other sources about the news media and political publicity in international election news. Drawing from earlier works by Pan and Kosicki (1993), they theorized that propositions are the building blocks of macrolevel framing devices called *scripts*. Scripts integrate verbal and visual propositions into hypotheses about how, or to what extent, the press and publicity are consequential to campaign outcomes. Esser and D'Angelo observed enough different script structures to warrant the claim that there are at least three press frames (conduit, strategy, and accountability) and three publicity frames (also called conduit, strategy, and accountability).

Conduit frames in news stories emphasize the basic connectivity function of mass communication in modern media societies. With press conduit frames, the news media are portrayed as the main conveyance for disseminating information in an environment of mediated wars with no specific intention other than stressing the transmission function (e.g., by showing reporters or cameras present at a site). Stories with *publicity conduit frames* contain references that report publicity acts by politicians (or the military) in a neutral, merely descriptive way (i.e., the media convey briefings or Pentagon-supplied video material in an uncontextualized way).

Strategy frames portray the news media as engaged in a continuous conflict with political actors over message control. Such stories stress the importance of both free and paid media as political tools and also stress the politicians' desire for positive press and their efforts to achieve it. At times these stories evince a cynical undertone of exposing the manipulative efforts to control information. With press strategy frames, the news media is portrayed as an autonomous, consequential actor in the strategic game of politics, locked in contentious interplay with political actors. Stories with *publicity strategy frames* emphasize the tactical considerations and strategic purposes behind publicity moves—usually aimed at influencing the public or the press.

Accountability frames in news stories discuss press coverage or publicity actions within the context of democratic functioning, for example, how far media actors and publicity actors fulfill their role as instruments of democracy. "Press accountability frames" portray the news media as performing a public service by providing citizens with useful and self-critical information on press behavior itself, or—in the case of *publicity accountability frames*—with instructive and insightful information on the public relations aspects of political action. In both cases, these frames would be welcomed as an intelligible and potentially empowering commentary.

These frames were validated through a comparative analysis of American, British, and German campaign coverage (Esser & D'Angelo, 2006). Journalists use metacoverage for several reasons. News research has shown that changes in real-world conditions lead to changes in reporting patterns and story narratives (McQuail, 2005; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). In this sense, news re-presents the world according to how media professionals perceive and reconstruct it. Metacoverage reflects "the view among journalists that a [political or military] campaign is a composite reality that cannot be covered fully and accurately unless news stories at times consider how the behaviors of news media and political publicity intersect with each other" (D'Angelo & Esser, 2003, p. 90). Why do journalists use those three frames in their metacoverage? The concept of "media professionalism" (McQuail, 2005, chap. 11; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, chap. 5) helps explain the motivations behind each frame.

With regard to conduit frames, the professional standards and news values of relevance, completeness, and factuality require news reporters to include the obvious presence and factual significance of the mass media and PR/publicity operations in their reports of a "media war."

As to strategy frames, another aspect of media professionalism comes into play. Journalists want to be more than mere mouthpieces of politicians; instead, journalists seek to control, frame, and interpret the flow of political communication themselves (Zaller, 1999). Their sense of professionalism, in which autonomy and independence figure prominently, leads them to seek ways to "stamp their marks on political stories" (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999, p. 215). Media actors pursue their own interests (striving for public attention, economic success, and professional reputation) and follow a distinct media logic (in terms of selection criteria and presentational styles) that often clashes with the political publicity logic (striving for message control, strategic communication, and public opinion formation)—in both Germany and the United States (Meyer 2002). In this sense, strategy frames are very attractive to journalists because these frames allow journalists to describe the relationship between the news media and political news management in a compelling and arresting way, and they also satisfy important news values like drama and conflict.

Finally, there are accountability frames. The concept of media accountability asks journalists not only to hold politicians or business people accountable but also to inquire whether media professionals fulfill their primary responsibility, which is to provide a good public service (Fengler, 2003, p. 819; McQuail 2005, p. 214;

Pritchard, 2000, p. 2). In the United States, the Hutchinson Commission on Freedom of the Press (1947, p. 94) urged "vigorous, mutual criticism" as a key to media accountability. In this sense, accountability frames demonstrate a concern on behalf of journalists to uphold professional standards by monitoring and self-critically analyzing developments in political and war reporting. Because the mass media have become one of the nerve centers of modern campaigns and wars, the public needs to be informed about the performance of the media and of government institutions that try to influence the media.

Whereas conduit frames are most closely connected to the professional role model of the "disseminator" and the strategy frame to the "cynical interpreter," the accountability frame mainly results from a professional role model of journalists as "advocates of the public" and "ambassadors of their profession." Accountability frames address the complexities of the media–politics relationship and are aimed at illuminating the rules and practices of media societies and enhancing democratic participation of well-educated citizens. These aspects are of similar importance in Germany as they are in the United States (Fengler, 2003; Thomass, 2003; Weiss, 2005).

The literature on war reporting suggests that there might be a fourth frame. Zelizer (1992) found that media-related stories on the first Gulf War often centered on archetypical figures. As much as media discourse on World War II often focused on Edward R. Murrow's role, the changes in reportorial practices in 1991 were often linked to CNN's Peter Arnett—a fact Zelizer (1992, p. 73) refers to as the "Peter Arnett phenomenon." In 2003, many reporters apparently became infected by an "Arnett virus." This resulted in journalist-centered, diary-like stories and self-portraits of reporter personalities working under conditions of personal stress and professional hardship and in many references to both heroes and fictional characters within journalism that were mentioned in dispatches (cf. Tumber & Palmer, 2004, pp. 29-31). Preliminary scanning of the 2003 Gulf War coverage underscored our expectation that this tendency to exemplify and personify journalists' experience in war-related metacoverage received a boost from the newly adopted technique of embedding correspondents with fighting troops. More systematic pretests found that Gulf War stories indeed contained a greater variety of press- and publicity-related propositions than election stories. These framing devices spoke in favor of including a fourth frame, the *personalization frame*, to capture this inclination to journalistic self-observation. The present study therefore amends Esser and D'Angelo's (2003, 2006) concept by a press personalization frame (in stories narrated around the personality and experience of individual reporters) and a publicity personalization frame (in stories focusing on personalities of political or military publicity).

Hypotheses and Research Questions

This analysis has an exploratory character because no previous research has systematically examined metacoverage in the context of war. The main purpose of this study

is to explore the concept's generalization across various types of mediated events and to contribute to this new line of research. More specifically, this study aims to elucidate by means of a frame analysis how metacoverage changed in the German national press from the first Gulf War in 1991 to the second in 2003. It focuses on Germany because Esser and D'Angelo (2006) introduced metacoverage as a cross-national concept and found a surprising number of similarities between press and publicity coverage in German and U.S. election news. Esser and D'Angelo explained this result by general changes in European news cultures (cf. Hallin & Mancini, 2004, chap. 8; Plasser & Plasser, 2002, chap. 4) and, more specifically, a move toward a more media-oriented political communication culture in Germany (Pfetsch, 2004; Esser, 2008). There remain many important systemic differences between both countries, but on the level of journalistic practices relevant for this study, the similarities seem sufficiently large to draw meaningful conclusions from the German case. Germany was chosen to provide a detached, noninvolved perspective on the two wars. In 1991, Chancellor Helmut Kohl's conservative government approved of the U.S.-led invasion (and contributed financially) but cited obstacles in the German constitution that prevented Germany from any military involvement. In 2003, the decision of Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's liberal government against joining the U.S.-led "Coalition of the Willing" was controversial abroad but struck a chord with people at home. In the midst of a heated election campaign, he had the majority of public opinion behind him, which helped him get reelected in fall 2002 (Haumann & Petersen, 2004). The media shared Schroeder's stance. In 2002, while still alert to the dangers of terrorism after 9/11, the German press appeared less in a state of siege than their American counterpart. German reporting was more sympathetic to Hans Blix's teams of U.N. weapon inspectors and less convinced about Baghdad's connection with bin Laden or about the existence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction (Lehmann, 2005). In congruence with Bennett's (1990) indexing hypothesis, the German press followed the contours of the Iraq debate found among German political elites, whereas the U.S. press followed the cues and views of the U.S. political elites (Maurer, Vogelsang, Weiss, & Weiss, 2007; Bennett, Lawrence, & Livingston, 2007). Yet the latter point, in particular, triggered a critical debate in the German press about how the American media treated the Iraq issue (Gehlen, 2003; Voegele, 2004).

The literature on media criticism, metacoverage, and modern war reporting led us to eight assumptions. Because of the record presence of media representatives and the proliferation of modern, easy-to-use telecommunication technologies, we assumed that total war coverage increased from 1991 to 2003 (Hypothesis 1: War coverage increased from 1991 to 2003). We also assumed that the growing significance of press coverage and military publicity operations in media wars led to an increase in metacoverage from 1991 to 2003 (Hypothesis 2: Metacoverage increased from 1991 to 2003). Because we analyzed newspapers from a country that did not join the war and whose political and military leadership did not impose reporting restrictions or censorship measures on its journalists, we expected to find fewer references to military publicity operations and more to the role of the news media

(Hypothesis 3: Metacoverage made fewer references to the publicity process than to the news media). We assumed, first, that when newspapers reported on behaviors or mistakes of the news media, these references would be kept rather general; second, that the press would criticize television more readily than its own turf; and third, that if the press scrutinized behaviors of the press, the reporting newspaper would exclude itself from the criticism and focus on other newspapers' behavior instead (Hypothesis 4: Metacoverage on the German news media would refer to other media organizations more often than to the reporting newspaper itself). We also assumed an effect of the proliferation of media pages on metacoverage. Because the German press experienced a remarkable expansion of media pages in the mid-1990s, we assumed that the majority of war-related metacoverage in 1991 appeared on the main news pages and in 2003 on the now-expanded specialty media pages (Hypothesis 5: Metacoverage was concentrated on the main news pages in 1991 and on the newly introduced "media" pages in 2003).

Because of allegations of an anti-American bias in German war coverage, we further assumed that reports on the U.S. news media would be more critical than reports on other countries' news media and that reports on U.S. military publicity would be more negative than reports on other countries' military publicity (Hypothesis 6: Metacoverage on the U.S. media and U.S. publicity would be more negative than references to other countries' news media and publicity efforts). With regard to metacoverage frames, our knowledge is confined to election studies. Because there are no benchmark framing analyses with which to predict the occurrence of press and publicity frames in war coverage, the following research question is posed (Research Question 1): Which metacoverage frames occur most frequently in German war news? In terms of the newly added personalization frame, we expected to see an increase from 1991 to 2003 (Research Question 2: Will there be an increase in the personalization frame?). Against the background of our prediction that the U.S. news media would be portrayed more negatively than the German news media, we formulated a third research question (Research Question 3): How does the framing of the U.S. press differ from the framing of the German press? Finally, concluding again from election-based research, we cautiously assumed press frames and publicity frames to be reported mainly in combination with a small and specific set of topics—although, because of the pilot character of this study, we were unable to predict them specifically—whereas other topics could be shown as being resistant to metacoverage connections (Research Question 4: What are the most common topic combinations of press frames and publicity frames?).

Method

We selected five opinion-leading national newspapers for analysis: *Welt*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, and

Tageszeitung (Taz). The *Welt* is the most conservative and the *Tageszeitung (Taz)* the most liberal. These five papers are very influential because journalists working for other German media organizations use these newspapers as important guides for news selection as well as yardsticks for editorial opinion (Reinemann, 2003). These newspapers can be seen as indicative and representative of the German media system (Eilders, 2000). They do not constitute a random sample, however, which is why we will use significance tests as an indication of robustness only.[2] We chose to content-analyze all the war-related coverage in these newspapers published during the 2-week period of January 17 to 30, 1991, and the 2-week period of March 20 to April 2, 2003. Both periods correspond to the first 2 weeks after the respective U.N. ultimatums had expired and represent the decisive phases of military invasion, intensive reporting, media sense-making, and frame building.

The data-gathering procedure started by identifying all war-related stories that appeared during our coding periods in the News, Arts/Life/Culture, and Media sections that made explicit reference to the first or second Gulf War. The steps of analysis followed, with slight modifications, the model of press and publicity framing as laid out by Esser and D'Angelo (2003, p. 623), which is modeled on an earlier conceptualization by Pan and Kosicki (1993). The main goals of framing research are twofold: (a) to identify the textual units and framing devices used by journalists to construct news frames within the parameters of professional practice, institutional constraints, socialized news values, and political contexts; and (b) to examine how these news frames provide cues that both activate and interact with the recipients' prior knowledge to affect their interpretations, decision making, and judgments (D'Angelo, 2002).

The study at hand focuses less on framing effects and more on "frame building" (Scheufele, 1999, p. 115) or "frame construction" (D'Angelo, 2002, p. 880). Accordingly, a frame is understood as a central organizing idea in a news story that supplies context and suggests what role the press and the publicity process play in modern wars through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration. Framing the press in war coverage thus means calling attention to a specific function of the news media (e.g., serving as a conduit) while obscuring others (e.g., acting as a counteractor in a strategic game of media politics) that will likely influence recipients' perceptions of the press' role in wars. Special care was taken to identify the narrative devices that journalists used to build these frames in their war stories. Although these devices can be of manifold nature (D'Angelo, 2002, p. 881), this study put special emphasis on statement-level propositions. An important step in the model of press and publicity framing is to determine whether a war-related story contained enough propositions about the news media or military news management to warrant the claim that either the news media or military news management was a topic in the story. In the present analysis, the word *enough* meant that a meaningful proportion of the story had to be either about the press or the publicity process. This was determined by a combination of quantitative measurement (propositions had to

make up substantially more than 10% of the text body) and qualitative assessment (propositions' level of reflection had to be elevated or high).[3] A further step in the model was to determine whether the framing devices were salient enough to create a specific frame—by means of frequency, prominence, homogeneity, and semantic meaning. The codebook's categories contained several lists of prototypical propositions that alluded to either one of the four press frames (conduit, strategy, accountability, or personalization) or to one of the four publicity frames (conduit, strategy, accountability, or personalization). The ultimate coding decision whether a set of propositions coded in a specific story revealed a clear pattern and fit either of the frames was facilitated by examples in the codebook.[4] The last step was to determine the topic profile of each story and, finally, the topic/frame combinations.

The coding instrument and coding process proved to be valid, with intercoder reliability coefficients ranging from at least .8 for frames to at least .7 for propositions, with an average agreement coefficient of .85 across all categories.[5]

Findings

Amount of War Coverage and Metacoverage

During the 2003 Iraq War, three times as many journalists were based in the Gulf region than 12 years before—often embedded and equipped with modern technology. Thus, we expected a higher level of war reporting in 2003. All together, the examined newspapers published a total of 3,705 stories, with 1,752 stories appearing in the first 2 weeks of Gulf War I and 1,953 stories in the first 3 weeks of Gulf War II (see Table 1). The amount of war coverage increased by 11% from 1991 to 2003, a significant increase, one-way $\chi^2(1) = 10.8$, $p = .001$, that can be seen as support for our first hypothesis.

Of particular interest is the quantitative development of metacoverage over time. Because of a surge in mediatization in the second Iraq war, we predicted an increase in metacoverage in 2003. We expected that the larger number of stationed correspondents, the larger number of television stations, the greater variety of journalistic perspectives (e.g., CNN vs. Al-Jazeera), and the enhanced professionalism of military publicity operations would have a reciprocal effect on war reporting. Our second hypothesis, that the increasingly mediated character of the war would filter into news accounts, was supported by our data (see Table 1). The number of stories that contained a substantial amount of metacoverage—beyond the required minimum threshold—increased significantly by 75%, from 183 stories during the first Iraq conflict to 321 stories during the second Iraq conflict, one-way $\chi^2(1) = 37.2$, $p < .0001$. Expressed differently, whereas the share of metacoverage was 10% of the total war coverage in 1991 (183 of 1,792 stories), it had reached 16% already in 2003 (321 of 1,953 stories). Because there were no meaningful differences between the

Table 1
Share of Metacoverage

	Iraq War I, 1991, *n*	Iraq War II, 2003, *n*	Change, %
Total number of war stories	1,792	1,953	+11
War stories containing metacoverage	183	321	+75

Note: Content analysis of five leading German dailies (*Welt*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, and *Taz–Tageszeitung*) from January 17 to 30, 1991, and March 20 to April 2, 2003. The unit of analysis is "stories."

individual newspapers, we have represented our sample as an aggregate in the following analyses as well.

Self-Coverage

Metacoverage encompasses references to both the news media and publicity operations. In times of war, it is very difficult for newspapers to acquire substantial information about the second dimension, that is, military news management. It would require enormous effort and determination to investigate the Pentagon's PR and publicity strategy, especially for a distant bystander like the German press. By contrast, it is much easier to report on the very public role of the mass media. Our third hypothesis therefore predicted that metacoverage in the German papers would focus more on the media than on publicity operations. This was confirmed (see Table 2): Metacoverage on both wars was primarily driven by a high degree of media self-referentiality with 87% of references on the news media, whereas the discussion of military and political publicity was very restrained by comparison (13%). The differences between the two dimensions are substantial for both 1991, one-way $\chi^2(1) = 324.6$, $p < .0001$, and 2003, one-way $\chi^2(1) = 823.2$, $p < .0001$.

The research literature on media criticism led us to predict that media self-coverage would be kept rather general and that the press would rather focus on television than on its own turf. Both assumptions were confirmed. The bulk of propositions were on news media in general without any specification of country or media type (1991, 33%; 2003, 35%; see Table 2). This general category made up a significantly larger part of metacoverage than any other group of on-media propositions. It is also noteworthy that the German press spent more room inspecting the U.S. news media than the German war coverage (see Table 2). Further analyses showed that anytime the German press reported on German news media, it tended to examine TV coverage more frequently (87%) and critically than newspaper coverage (13%; not depicted in Table 2). The tendency to turn a blind eye on one's own performances but scrutinize others more readily (especially television, which is the main competitor of print after all) is well known in research on media reporting. This

Table 2
Two Dimensions of Metacoverage: News Media and Public Relations/Publicity

	Iraq War I, 1991, *n* (%)	Iraq War II, 2003, 2003, *n* (%)
Total number of framing devices (propositions)[a]	610 (100)	1,494 (100)
Propositions with reference to the news media		
News media in general (without country specification)	198 (33)	523 (35)
German news media	106 (17)	220 (15)
U.S. news media	129 (21)	228 (15)
Iraqi/Arab news media	4 (1)	235 (16)
Other countries' news media	91 (15)	96 (6)
Propositions with reference to political and military publicity		
U.S. publicity	51 (8)	135 (9)
Iraqi publicity	31 (5)	57 (4)

Note: Content analysis of five leading German dailies (*Welt*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, and *Taz–Tageszeitung*) from January 17 to 30, 1991, and March 20 to April 2, 2003. The unit of analysis is "propositions."
a. Analysis includes all framing devices (propositions) whose level of reflection was rated elevated or high on a 3-point scale.

blind spot was not too big in the case at hand, though. In the few instances where German newspapers scrutinized war coverage of German newspapers (again, not depicted in Table 2), the reporting paper did not exclude itself from the criticism. In 38 of 41 documented cases, the reporting paper included itself in the discussion by using phrases such as "we as the press" or "this is true for all German media." This sense of reflection and self-examination remained a rare exception though (and was found in 15 of 504 metacoverage stories only). Our fourth hypothesis, that metacoverage on the German news media refers to other media organizations more frequently than to the reporting newspaper itself, was thereby supported.

Metacoverage on News Pages and Media Pages

The previous studies by Esser and D'Angelo examined metacoverage in election campaigns and analyzed political news stories only. They assumed that the increasingly mediated character of politics would find its expression in an increasingly mediated character of political stories. The present study examined, in addition to political news, stories in the Media section and Arts & Culture section. This was done to answer the question whether the introduction of Media pages led newspapers to shift their war-related metacoverage from the News pages to designated Media sections. Our fifth hypothesis predicted such a move because many German papers had set up new Media pages or expanded their existing Media sections greatly between the first and the second Iraq war.

The empirical data, however, show another picture. Although the number of war stories had doubled in the newspapers' Media pages from 1991 (57 stories) to 2003 (105 stories), the bulk of war-related metacoverage still appeared on the News pages (1991, 119 stories; 2003, 183 stories). The development of specialized Media pages contributed to a general increase in metacoverage but did not lead to a shift away from the political pages. In fact, metacoverage on the News pages rose from 7% in 1991 to 11% in 2003. All in all, the ratio of metacoverage stories on News pages and Media pages remained fully intact from 1991 (68%:32%) to 2003 (64%:36%).[6] Hypothesis 5 thus was not confirmed. This leads us to conclude that wars, like election campaigns, are perceived by journalists as primarily political events whose mediated character induces journalists to cover them as news topics first and foremost but combined with press frames or publicity frames. The metacoverage concept seems well equipped to analyze the narrative structure of reports on these mediated events.

Our sixth hypothesis stated that metacoverage on U.S. media and publicity would be more negative than on any other country. This hypothesis received mixed support. Contrary to speculation about an outright anti-American bias in the German press, only 31% of the 345 propositions on the U.S. news media were negative during both wars (with the rest being positive, ambivalent, or neutral). German papers criticized U.S. journalists mainly for cutting out antiwar protests, civilian harm, and military casualties and for neglecting their objectivity norm by being overly patriotic. But these newspapers were even more critical of the performance of the German news media (41% negative) and of how the news media in general (36% negative) struggled with its role in both wars. It is true, however, that the German press was significantly less critical of Arab media organizations like Al-Jazeera (22% negative) than of the U.S. media (χ^2 test of independence = 4.23, $df = 1$, $p < .05$). But this kind of U.S. skepticism did not show for political and military news management. Here, the German press was equally critical of U.S. publicity operations (49% negative) and Iraqi publicity operations (45% negative) (χ^2 test of independence = 0.09, $df = 1$, $p =$ n.s.).

Frames of Metacoverage

When journalists make the news media or the publicity process a central theme of their reports, they do so by using specific frames. Conduit frames present journalists and news organizations as pure brokers of information; statements about the media—or about PR/publicity—are purely descriptive. Strategy frames portray the news media as autonomous and self-interested protagonists whose activities are consequential for politicians and other actors. Also, PR/publicity is depicted as primarily guided by special interests and motivated by tactical considerations. Accountability frames present the media as capable of reflection and self-criticism and as concerned about journalistic standards and social responsibility. Stories on PR/publicity with such a frame are intended to educate the public about public relations practices and necessities in media-driven societies. Personalization frames

encompass stories about media personalities who make their own personal experiences and subjective perceptions the center of their war reporting. Such stories structure a war report around the personality of the author or another journalist. Accordingly, a similar frame was used for the publicity dimension of metacoverage as well to determine whether stories on news management were also tied more to personalities. In answering our first research question (Which metacoverage frames occur most frequently in German war news?), we focus first on press frames and then on publicity frames.

News media frames. In terms of press frames, metacoverage on the two wars was remarkably similar. Both in 1991 and 2003, German newspapers used evenly proportioned shares of conduit frames, strategy frames, and accountability frames to portray the role of the news media (ranging between 25% and 36%; see upper part of Table 3). A χ^2 test of independence found no meaningful differences in the distribution of these three frames, $\chi^2(2) = 2.27$, p = n.s. The fourth frame, personalization, was least used but gained considerably in prominence from 1991 to 2003. This boost in personality-centered reporting from 7% to 15% was significant, one-way $\chi^2(1) = 18.48$, $p < .0001$, and was also noted in other studies (Voegele, 2004). Personalized stories that highlight the news workers' individual first-hand experience increased at the expense of conduit frames that highlight the news workers' function as technical transmitters. Strategy stories, which present the news media as active consequential actors, were balanced with accountability stories, which reflect the media's war involvement in self-critical and educational terms (see upper part of Table 3).

Publicity frames. The picture of publicity frames resembles the picture of press frames in important ways. Again, there were no meaningful differences in the distribution of publicity frames between the first and second Gulf conflict. War-related metacoverage, again, remained rather stable over time: German newspapers used roughly 35% conduit publicity frames, 35% strategy frames, and 20% accountability frames to discuss the role of government public relations and military news in 1991 and 2003 (see lower part of Table 3). A chi-square test of independence found no significant differences in the distribution of these three frames, $\chi^2(2) = 1.87$, p = n.s. The fact that the German news media communicated many publicity and propaganda messages neutrally (via conduit frames) could indicate the relative success of the Pentagon media strategy. After the rather distant pool system of 1991 was replaced by the more intimate system of embedding reporters, military publicity operations were perceived with less hostility. Instead of portraying military news management as an opponent that was motivated by strategic or even manipulative intentions (strategy frame), many German journalists presented it in a rather cooperative, mediating way (using conduit frames). But the German quality press deserves credit for its conscious and sensitive approach to the problem of military news management by also using accountability frames. That way, the papers tried to disclose the difficult conditions of war coverage in a responsible way. Yet our data also indicate

Table 3
Press Frames and Publicity Frames

	Iraq War I 1991, *n* (%)	Iraq War II 2003, *n* (%)	Ranking of Frame Prominence
Press with conduit frame	53 (36)	68 (25)	1
Press with strategy frame	44 (30)	78 (29)	1
Press with accountability frame	39 (27)	72 (26)	1
Press with personalization frame	10 (7)	42 (15)	4
Total	146 (100)	260 (100)	
Publicity with conduit frame	15 (30)	36 (40)	1
Publicity with strategy frame	22 (43)	30 (33)	1
Publicity with accountability frame	9 (18)	15 (16)	3
Publicity with personalization frame	1 (1)	9 (9)	4
Total	47 (100)	90 (100)	

Note: Content analysis of five leading German dailies (*Welt*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, and *Taz–Tageszeitung*) from January 17 to 30, 1991, and March 20 to April 2, 2003. The unit of analysis is "frames."

that a comprehensive and enlightening analysis of government news management was asking too much of real-time press coverage. The share of the publicity-related accountability frames in both wars ranged from 16% to 18% (see lower part of Table 3), which corresponds approximately to the shares known from election coverage (Esser & D'Angelo, 2006). The newly considered personalization frame, which presents military publicity from a "people" perspective, was still a peripheral matter, but its presence nonetheless underscores a general tendency toward more personality-driven war coverage. It increased significantly over time, one-way $\chi^2(1) = 49$, $p = .03$.

Thus, to answer Research Question 1, there were about as many conduit frames as strategy frames in the metacoverage about the two Iraq wars. Accountability frames, which emphasize the press's awareness of professional standards and democratic norms, played a slightly smaller role. Research Question 2, on whether there was an increase in personalization frames, could be clearly answered in the positive, albeit on a relatively low level. Some of the personalized stories were self-congratulatory and narcissistic, others critical and dissociating in nature. What ought we to make of these trends? From the standpoint of normative democratic theory (which sees the media as having an obligation to facilitate the participation of informed citizens in a media-constructed public sphere), conduit frames can be considered unproblematic—neither helpful nor hurtful. Strategy frames, on the other hand, are said to have potentially negative effects on the image, credibility, and perceived legitimacy of the political communication process. In Kerbel's (1999) view, for example, strategically framed news stories neither educate the people nor protect

the common good but simply promote public distrust and political alienation by focusing on the adversarial politician–reporter relationship and by attempting to lay bare the ugly underbelly of a troubled system without doing anything to improve it. The accountability frame, in contrast, is held in high esteem by normative democratic theory (cf. McQuail, 2005, chap. 7 and 8). The accountability frame is seen as a potentially empowering commentary on the nature of media politics and media wars, which adds to, rather than detracts from, the stock of useful information available to the average citizen. The German press has to be acknowledged for using a fair share of accountability frames; despite an unmistakable tendency toward personality-centered self-admiration, the German press nevertheless strived to assist citizens to reach a more educated judgment on the relationship of war and media.

This picture changed somewhat when we examined whether all countries were treated equally in the German press. To answer Research Question 3 (How did the framing of the U.S. news media differ from framing the German news media in the German press?), we looked especially at the use of accountability frames. As can be seen from the upper part of Table 4, the German press made a special effort to scrutinize the role and performance of German news media with regard to democratic norms, professional standards, and public needs. As a result, more than half of the reports on the German media were contextualized by edifying and constructive accountability frames (55% in 1991, 54% in 2003). This was true for only a third of the reports on the U.S. media. Instead, discussions of the role and performance of the U.S. news media were more often couched in strategic frames (focusing on the goals, interests, power plays, and instrumentalization of the news media without giving explanatory, instructive background information). The same picture showed for reports on U.S. military publicity efforts, as can be seen from the lower part of Table 4. Here, again, strategic scenarios prevailed (48% to 54%) over discussions about the democratic value of these news management operations (30% to 32%). Of special interest is the fact that in 2003 not a single statement by U.S. military publicity spokespeople was conveyed with a conduit frame (0%) in the German press; all those statements were subject to journalistic intervention, mostly by imposing a strategy or accountability frame.

Frame and Topic Combinations

In addressing Research Question 4, we examined the most frequent and typical connections between metacoverage frames and other topics in the media war environment. Our cautious expectation that we would find a small and specific set of preferred frame-topic combinations in war coverage was confirmed only for the publicity dimension. The majority of publicity frames occurred in conjunction with stories about the topics of official announcements and public speeches, general strategy and war tactics, and leadership personalities. This concurs with findings from election research where publicity frames were also found to be tied to stories on

Table 4
Framing Objects

	Framing Objects							
	German News Media		U.S. News Media		Iraqi/Arab News Media		News Media's Role in Wars Generally (Without Country Specification)	
	1991 (n = 106)	2003 (n = 215)	1991 (n = 127)	2003 (n = 214)	1991 (n = 4)	2003 (n = 233)	1991 (n = 187)	2003 (n = 507)
Propositions supporting a								
Conduit press frame	33	24	40	29	100	38	23	17
Strategy press frame	12	15	34	37	0	54	37	29
Accountability press frame	55	54	24	20	0	6	35	34
Personalization press frame	0	7	2	14	0	2	6	21
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	101	101

		U.S. Military Publicity		Iraqi Military Publicity		
	German Military Publicity	1991 (n = 50)	2003 (n = 124)	1991 (n = 30)	2003 (n = 54)	Military Publicity in General
Propositions supporting a						
Conduit publicity frame	Not analyzed	14	0	7	17	Not analyzed
Strategy publicity frame		48	54	60	33	
Accountability publicity frame		32	30	33	15	
Personalization publicity frame		6	16	0	35	
Total		100	100	100	100	

Note: Content analysis of five leading German dailies (*Welt*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, and *Taz–Tageszeitung*) from January 17 to 30, 1991, and March 20 to April 2, 2003. The unit of analysis is "propositions." As in Table 2, this analysis is based on all propositions whose level of reflection was elevated or high. Other than in Table 2, propositions with reference to "other countries' news media" were omitted; another 50 propositions had to be omitted because frame allocation was ambiguous.

leadership personalities (candidates), their public appearances and statements, and discussions of their strategies and motives behind campaigns (Esser & D'Angelo, 2006). A similar pattern could not be recognized for press frames. They appeared largely independent of the thematic context in war coverage. This is an interesting finding insofar as it lends support to the thesis of mediatization as a "total phenomenon." Irrespective of the topics in the media war environment, the news media play a role and, consequently, are being woven into the story. Our fourth research question, which concerned topic/frame combinations, thus was only partially supported.

Conclusion

Metacoverage is understood as a discursive outcome of structural mediatization processes in the social world. Structurally, mediatization represents one of several macro trends of social change—besides commercialization, modernization, and so on—and describes the mass media's evolution to the central intermediary agent, or conduit, between communication partners in society. But the media are not mere passive channels for political communication. Rather, they often act strategically and pursue their own aims and rules that do not necessarily coincide with those of political communicators. In fact, political actors have to adapt their behavior to the media logic and come to rely on strategically thinking publicity and public diplomacy expertise. These developments resulted in a press- and publicity-constructed public sphere that differs fundamentally from the traditional ideal of an open and equal forum of democratic debate. The news media, if they accept their public interest obligations, have a social responsibility to educate the public about the changed rules of media politics and media wars and hold participants accountable for their actions. By adding an important discursive dimension, metacoverage extends previous theorizing (e.g., Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999) about the mediatization concept. The news media weave these structural mediatization elements into their stories by spinning a variety of press and publicity frames around relevant topics.

Metacoverage has implications for other theoretical concepts. First, it relates to research on media self-reporting that previously relied on either traditional content analysis (e.g., Johnston et al., 1996) or specific case studies (e.g., Turow, 1994). Both approaches were rather limited in their ability to unveil the different set of roles and functions that the press and publicity process can perform. A framing approach seems better suited to detect these latent meanings. Second, metacoverage enhances our understanding of the narratives used in political reporting. In their content analysis of the 2000 presidential campaign coverage, Farnsworth and Lichter (2003) discussed a new trend of "story about the story coverage," which they described as a further example of mediated coverage. Mediated coverage has also been called press-centered (Patterson, 1994, p. 204) when "the journalist, not the candidate or any other newsmaker, is the primary communicator" (Hallin, 1992, p. 11), or self-referential

(Kerbel, 1999, p. 85) when "reporters reflect in their reports about themselves and their troubles" (Farnsworth & Lichter, 2003, p. 103). It is generally seen as a questionable trend because it is said to divert attention from more substantial story topics and to present media politics relations in predominantly strategic and cynical terms (Kerbel, 1999, pp. 83-86). The concept of metacoverage as introduced here, though, demonstrates that journalists use several press and publicity frames besides strategy and that press and publicity frames do not replace but rather appear in conjunction with other topics. Finally, with regard to war reporting, most previous research focused on the role of the news media and on military news management but hardly any on their depiction in the press. This is surprising insofar as the public acceptance and perceived legitimacy of wars—which are also a core goal of strategic public diplomacy—depend entirely on their media-constructed image.

Specifically, pertaining to the example of the last two Gulf conflicts, this study showed that an increasing mediatedness of wars led to a general increase in war coverage (Hypothesis 1 supported), especially to a substantial increase in metacoverage (Hypothesis 2 supported). The latter could be explained by the fact that the press reported extensively on the news media's own increased significance; by contrast, the enhanced professionalism of military news management received much less media attention (Hypothesis 3 supported). This self-reference may not be equated with self-reflection because reports on the media are usually kept rather general; if criticism is more specific it is aimed at television (the main competitor of print) more often than at the press. This tendency to turn a blind eye to one's own turf is well known in research on media reporting and seems to be true for metacoverage as well (Hypothesis 4 supported). Research on metacoverage expects media references in all kinds of stories and newspaper sections, not just on specialist media pages or in designated media columns. The assumption behind this is that the omnipresence of mass media and publicity efforts throughout society will also be reflected in all areas of reporting (especially on News pages, but also on Arts & Culture pages). This assumption was confirmed. The competing assumption that press and publicity topics would be concentrated on the Media pages was not confirmed (Hypothesis 5 disconfirmed). There was also no support for outright anti-Americanism in German metacoverage, although coverage of the U.S. news media's role and performance was distinctly critical (Hypothesis 6 disconfirmed).

In line with the metacoverage concept, our results showed that media wars are reported primarily as political events on the main news pages, where they are combined with press frames or publicity frames. The fact that political news gets more mediated underscores our position that metacoverage has to be understood as a concept of political communication research first and foremost. From a perspective of normative democratic theory, the conduit frame can be assessed as unproblematic and the explanatory accountability frame as most desirable. On the other hand, the strategy frame is regarded as more problematic for the credibility of the media system and political system. The personalization frame may be regarded as an

expression of a growing trend toward celebrity journalists and self-promotion in journalism. In general, the Gulf War coverage showed a balanced distribution of frames (Research Question 1) with a clear increase of personalization frames (Research Question 2). The frames considered the most valuable and helpful—accountability frames—were reserved more for discussions of the German press than the U.S. press (Research Question 3). With regard to the topic environment of metacoverage, it emerged that discussions of the news media were linked to a very wide variety of war-related topics whereas discussions of publicity measures (which are related to strategic public diplomacy) were usually combined with a more narrow range of topics—often dealing with general strategy and information matters (Research Question 4).

The link to strategic public diplomacy is particularly interesting. As the campaigns to mobilize support for both U.S.-led wars made clear, strategic public diplomacy is most effective in settings in which the level of information held by the public is low and in which the operations of strategic communication can be kept out of the public eye. It is for this reason that image management efforts and government publicity efforts are so often designed to stay invisible. In that sense, such efforts have been characterized as inherently undemocratic and a threat to the legitimacy of the policies that they help to produce (Manheim, 1994). In this context, metacoverage in general and accountability frames in particular can provide citizens with useful, instructive, and insightful information about the doctored reality of modern wars. Especially those stories that discuss publicity actions in the context of the democratic process should be welcomed as an intelligible and potentially empowering commentary.

With regard to metacoverage as an analytic concept, this study allows us to draw important conclusions about its generalization and contextualization. It can be applied to not only political but also military campaigns—and thus presumably to any kind of mediated event. The methodological approach and the distinction into several types of frames were confirmed and seem generalizable. Yet transferring the concept from election coverage to war coverage made it necessary to add a fourth frame, which demonstrates that the concept is subject to context-dependent modifications. As future research extends to a broader range of mediated events and cross-national comparisons, the more contextualized it will become. Knowing about metacoverage is essential because "frames are powerful discursive cues that can impact cognition [and] public opinion formation" (D'Angelo, 2002, p. 873). Press and publicity frames influence public attitudes to the news media and the political system.

Notes

1. A LexisNexis search for the word combination *Iraq* and *media* in headlines and lead paragraphs between March 20 and April 20, 2003, generated 55 stories from NBC News, 44 stories from CNN, 52 stories from *USA Today*, 61 stories from the *Washington Post*, and 175 stories from the *New York Times.*

2. Our data do not strictly require significance testing because we analyzed all war stories in the leading German newspapers during the critical 2 weeks of each invasion—and could therefore be considered the universe. Our decision to run chi-square tests anyway is based on the broader theoretical view that our five-newspaper sample can be seen as a representative indicator of the entire German media system (see Eilders, 2000; Reinemann, 2003) and that the time periods analyzed are representative of German war coverage in general (see Lehmann 2004; Voegele, 2004). Nonetheless, we interpret all significance tests cautiously and are aware that inferences to other news outlets are problematic.

3. Level of reflection was measured on a 3-point scale with (1 = *low*) meaning "remark without context," (2 = *elevated*) meaning "observation with context," and (3 = *high*) meaning "comprehensive, analytical thought."

4. For example, propositions supporting a conduit frame could read, "The Nielson data showed that the number of average daily viewers for some news channels increased more than 300 percent in the first two weeks of the war" or "With record numbers of journalists on the ground, the networks were able to bring this war into the living rooms of millions of people." Propositions that support a strategy frame could read, for instance, "Failure of the U.S. news media to carry out their watchdog role can be attributed in part to the aggressive attempts by the Bush administration to intimidate the press. Many media organizations fell for the Pentagon's spin." And propositions supporting an accountability frame could run as follows: "Some media critics say that displays of overt patriotism are not appropriate for news organizations because they compromise journalistic norms of objectivity and independence. If journalists become an ally, they may begin to adhere firmly to a particular political ideology that causes them to always frame their issues from that perspective. This can make it difficult for a news organization to present a multitude of perspectives."

5. Agreement was calculated using the following formula, CR = 2 OA / C1 + C2 where CR means coder reliability, OA means number of observed agreements in coding decisions, C1 means number of coding decisions by first coder, and C2 means number of coding decisions by second coder.

6. Metacoverage in the Arts & Culture pages increased, albeit slightly, from 22% (1991) to 24% (2003).

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Frank Esser (PhD 1997, University of Mainz) is professor and chair of comparative media research in the Department of Mass Communication and Media Research at the University of Zurich. He is interested in cross-national studies of news and co-edited the book *Comparing Political Communication* (Cambridge University Press).